

Burns, H.G. (Jim).

REMARKS ON SPEED LISTENING FOR
THE BLIND.

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basis.

" 'Why not admit blind persons into the military service on a limited service basis to perform administrative, housekeeping, and other tasks for which they have demonstrated a capability in civilian life?' John F. Nagle, chief of the Washington office for the National Federation of the Blind asked.

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"Nagle, testifying at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on the draft, suggested that blind chaplains, lawyers, and therapists of various types could do military service as could storekeepers, switchboard operators and men in public relations jobs.

"Inequities in the present draft system and the problems of conscientious objectors figures prominently in the testimony of church groups.

"The Friends Committee on National Legislation, in prepared testimony of Ralph A. Rose of Annandale, Va., testified that if the draft must be extended it should show the 'greatest possible' respect for objections of conscience, including opposition to war which is not made 'in religious terms' and opposition to service 'in a particular war.'

"William P. Thompson, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church, said national draft standards are needed to prevent unfair actions by local boards including 'apparently punitive local administration of the Selective Service System.' "

REMARKS ON SPEED LISTENING FOR THE BLIND

The following article was submitted to the Council Bulletin by Professor H. G. Burns. Jim Burns is Corresponding Secretary of the Active Blind and a member of the Council's Scholarship Committee.

Some months ago, the Braille Monitor carried a very interesting article on techniques enabling the blind to become faster auditory readers, i. e., speed listening. One method proposed for this purpose was to compress more words into a shorter space of time by eliminating the extra pauses and extraneous sounds that occur in much of our speech

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p. 32-34.

whether talking conversationally or reading aloud.

A new device called the "Eltro MLR" pitch and tempo changer now permits a listener to alter the speed of taped materials either faster or slower without changing the pitch. Pitch may be changed to suit the listener, likewise, without any alteration in speed. Technical details are not provided in the descriptive article on the Eltro machine given in Audio Magazine, April, 1966, page 12. The Eltro sells for a mere \$3,950.00, making it prohibitive for the individual buyer but purchasable by agencies such as schools, blind orientation centers, etc. Apparently, there is no sacrifice of word sounds or phrasing as the listener feeds the taped material to himself for auditory perception and comprehension.

What speeds could we hope to achieve for speed listening? Normally, we comprehend spoken words offered at rates from 135 to 150 words per minute. This approximates the braille reading speed of a good braille reader. Average braille reading is much closer to 90-100 words per minute. Fast oral reading to a blind listener may approach 175-200 words per minute and still be comprehended. However, the reader cannot maintain such speeds, and, unless trained or blessed with a high comprehension level, the blind listener may find these speeds too fast at first. Yet, the need for comprehension at a faster perception level is keenly felt by blind high school and college students as well as men and women in the business and professional worlds. Visual reading speeds of 250 words per minute approximate the average for most adults. College and graduate students will often have visual reading speeds from 300-600 words per minute, depending on the difficulty of the material. I have often recommended, when asked by sighted professors testing their blind students, that roughly two-thirds more time could be allowed for reading a long objective test to a blind student. My justification for the figure is based on the assumption that the blind listener might manage 150 words per minute, easily, but lags behind the sighted reader's possible 250 words per minute. Actually, most of the blind college students I have met finish their exams at about the same time as the sighted, sometimes even before.

UCLA speed listening test records make political science text material intelligible at 200-225 words per minute. However, 250-275 words per minute are not intelligible to the untrained listener. Very likely these speeds and even those near 300 words per minute would be practical for a trained speed listener in reviewing material which he has already studied carefully at lower rates.

Speeds well beyond 200 words per minute are possible with the



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Eltro machine. Training the listener to perceive and, therefore, comprehend material beyond 200 words per minute is also possible according to an article summarizing experiments along this line as reported in the June, 1965 issue of the Journal of Educational Psychology. The visual reader has an advantage in being able to perceive a word group as a unit in one eye fixation. The auditory reader or speed listener has to depend on grouping the sequence of words into meaningful units. Therefore, while his central or comprehension processes in the brain may work with a great rapidity, his slow-up comes from the initial perceptual process. He must first take in and relate what comes to the brain through the ear. Visual reading gives one a perceived unit in one act and seems to bring us more quickly to the comprehension phase. If blind readers could increase their listening speeds by as much as 75-100 words per minute, it would be a remarkable and valuable accomplishment.

For further details on the Eltro MLR, write to the distributors, Gotham Audio Corporation, 2 W. 46th Street, New York, New York 10036.

A LETTER FROM INDIA
From A. N. Venkatasubramanian

Blind Cast Votes in India

I presented myself before the Election Officer at the booth at 11:15 A.M. My escort was by my side. Casting of votes had started at 6:00 in the morning. A long que was waiting at the door. By unanimous approval, I was allowed to pass through the door.

The officer verified my name in the electoral list. Our Village Tax Collector and the Agents for the candidates were present. No objection was raised. The officer asked me "Who is your seeing eye to cast your vote on the ballot paper?" I patted on my escort in silence. Immediately, the officer started to put questions to my friend. I heard the rustle of some papers. Perhaps to record his answers.

"What is your name?" the answer was (so and so, so and so) he demanded his full address. It was furnished. Then he asked his age. My friend answered "25." For awhile pin drop silence ensued. I

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